

My name is Elisabeth Herdic, I live in Lebanon, CT. I fully support HB 5372 An Act Concerning Dyslexia Instruction Offered in Teaching Preparation Programs.

My 6th grade daughter is dyslexic and dysgraphic. We knew that she was struggling way back in PreK. She really struggled to form letters and make out and break down sounds. We asked her teachers every year if she could be dyslexic, but were always shrugged off or told her struggles were developmentally normal until 3rd grade. The didn't seem to have a lot of information or understanding regarding dyslexia. We now know her struggles were not developmentally appropriate, and in that time she would have had a better chance of being on grade level if she had received evidence based structured literacy early on. As parents, we were lost with what steps to take, and how to advocate for her difficulties to be addressed. The educational system is so difficult for a parent to navigate. Parents are left to our own devices to stumble through the system. For our child the RTI process was a cruel cycle of trying various different interventions time after time that only showed minimal temporary improvement. She needed one consistent program, that was evidence based and proven to work for kids that learned like her. It wasn't until the end of 4th grade that we got a definite diagnosis of dyslexia. At that time a wonderful OG tutor was brought in to work with her a couple times a week, but the other 90% of her school week was still an extraordinary struggle.

My daughter now receives Orton Gillingham instruction 4-5 times per week from a certified OG teacher at a school that has been educating dyslexic students since 1920. All her teachers receive training and skills for best practices in understanding her leaning profile. Her teachers all work together to ensure that they are supporting her throughout her entire curriculum, without lowering the standards of expectations. She has come so far in the past two years. Academically, her reading and spelling have improved, her ability to form a written paper has increased. Her knowledge of her learning style, and what she needs to do to prepare and organize, and advocate for herself has grown. Psychosocially her self esteem is starting to improve. She is less anxious and doesn't constantly stress over what she can't do. She knows now that with the right support and the right education she can learn to do anything.

Dyslexia is a well researched reading disability. The data and methods are readily available. So why are our children left to fail? It is because all teachers are not being taught structured literacy methods as part of their higher education programs of study. How is this possible when dyslexia is the most common reading disability? And the proven structured literacy methods that should be taught would actually benefit all students. Teacher's and school system's have no incentive to lose a significant amount of time, going back to be properly trained and certified in OG instruction, or other structured literacy program after they have

graduated. It simply is not going to happen, and a 3-5 day course without a practical portion with a mentor is not sufficient. Teachers need to be ready once they graduate to understand and educate dyslexic students using an evidence based method.

Teachers who graduate prepared to comprehensively address dyslexic students needs with an evidence based structured literacy program will save districts money, and students time, and self esteem. Districts that do not understand dyslexia wait way to long to diagnose and intervene. This makes it much harder to catch students up, and destroys the students emotionally. All research shows that early intervention leads to the most success. Currently districts without OG certified teachers (or other evidence based structured literacy methods) sometimes contract out with outside tutors to meet the needs of dyslexic students. This is both expensive, and not in the best interest of the student. Students end up getting pulled from their other subjects to meet with a tutor; putting them behind in the classes they miss. Students need the right style of instruction to cross all their subjects and be implemented throughout their day. If an outside tutor is coming in for a short time to work with a student, it is not infused through their curriculum. Dyslexic students that receive early intervention also have greater success, leading to improved test scores (which is very important to districts), improved sense of self, increased success in life. The correlation between special education and dropping out of school is concerning and this is a way to create more successful students. These kids have so much to offer!

This bill is imperative to ensure that there are standards for knowledge and practice in teacher preparation programs in institutes of higher education. Teachers need to be prepared in structured literacy. Please support this bill to create accountability of higher education relating to previous legislation. Thank you again for you time.